

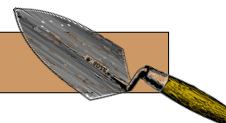


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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Group News

As you will now have gathered, this year's winter lecture programme will see us back downstairs in the main Market Hall in Appleby. Members with an email address on our membership system should have received a note advising them of the change. Everybody else should have been contacted directly.

You'll understand that this is a great disappointment as the main Market Hall has proved quite unsuitable for our meetings in the past. But the problems at Centre 67 that have given rise to the move occurred just after we had completed our new lecture programme and agreed dates with speakers. Given the continuing uncertainty a return to the Market Hall on our usual Tuesday evening seemed our least worst option, at least in the short term.

Looking to the future, the committee has considered several responses to the situation but felt that it would be unwise to make any decision until the future of Centre 67 is clarified and we have had the opportunity to take the views of members.

In any event, the December meeting, whilst still in the Market Hall, will be upstairs in the Supper Room, our original and probably favourite venue.

Elsewhere and on more a positive note, the launch of the Appleby Project went well and Martin Railton's initial field-walking sessions were well-supported. The geophysics proved extremely interesting and delivered several surprises. You can read a brief account of what was found in the next column and also, in much more detail, in Martin's report on the Castrigg Geophysics. This is now available in the Research section of the Group's website.

Finally, we're looking for speakers at next January's AGM. If you've been anywhere or done anything interesting in the archaeological line this summer and feel you could give a ten minute talk to members, please let Phyl know - we'd love to hear from you.

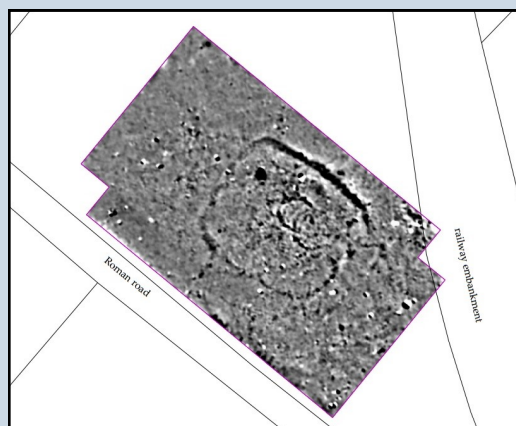
Best wishes, Martin Joyce



Appleby-in-Westmorland Project

About 16 people turned up for the launch meeting of the Appleby Project. After an introduction by Martin Railton, the group spent the afternoon washing finds from earlier field-walking. Barbara Blenkinship has since produced a detailed report on these for which we are very grateful.

The first survey weekend took place on the Appleby Grammar School playing field and each of the four half-days was well-attended. It had been hoped that the geophysics might reveal some traces of the medieval grammar school and excitement mounted when both rectangular and circular features were discovered. Disappointment followed when it was realised that these were relics of earlier football-field markings!



Castrigg Geophysical Survey

The second survey weekend in fields at Castrigg on the outskirts of the town was more productive. Crop marks have suggested that this is the site of a Roman fortlet and/or signal station. A rectangular enclosure and two inner circular features were indeed discovered, but this time Martin believed that these are Iron Age or Romano-British rather than Roman. Thus, for the second time in its history, Appleby Archaeology appears to have destroyed a Roman signal station.

Richard Stevens

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Summer Day trip Binchester Fort and Escomb Church

David Mason, our guide for the day, may have called Binchester 'the Pompeii of the North' but, standing in the cool Durham rain looking at grey stones and heaps of spoil, it was difficult to imagine having a bath in the commander's bath house in the fort. But with David's commentary and a little stretching of the mind it was possible to see how the building looked during the Roman occupation. The idea of a warm room did appeal, but a cold plunge pool was not so inviting. Still, there might have been soft towels with Binchester woven in the weave and there might also have been a personal slave to wrap them round you. At its best the bath house would have been highly decorated with bold figures and colours and the crack (or whatever Romans called gossip) would no doubt have been spicy and up to date.



David Mason in the regimental bath house with 1st Troop, Appleby Archaeology, looking on, the black sheet covers an area of plaster.

Binchester (Vinovia) Roman Fort stands on a plateau above the river Wear about 2 km north of Bishop Auckland. Dere Street, the main military road from the legionary fortress of York, runs through the fort and onward to the north, linking a series of forts - Lanchester, Ebchester, Corbridge, Risingham, High Rochester and Newstead - to Cramond on the Firth of Forth. Approximately 15 kilometres south of the fort lies Piercebridge, with the remarkable remains of the Roman bridge that carries Dere Street over the river Tees. Just north of the fort a road runs off to Newcastle and to the south a spur-road leaves Dere Street to link with the cross Pennine road at Bowes.

Travelling from Appleby for our day-trip, the A688 roughly follows the route of this spur so, in theory, Binchester should have been easy to find. But no - a paucity of signs and the one way streets of Bishop Auckland meant that Sat Nav was of no help whatsoever and several circuits of the market place were needed before a sign to 'Roman Binchester' was eventually located, low down at

the entrance to a steep downwards narrow lane. It was so low down in fact that it could easily have been obscured by a large dog. I believe I was not the only member to have experienced this problem!

The fort had attracted the attention of antiquarians in the 17th century and, according to local lore, in the 19th century the landowner discovered the commander's bathhouse when his horse and cart fell into a hole caused by the collapse of part of the hypocaust. Excavations in the late 19th century, mid and late 20th century revealed more of the centre of the fort. In 2004 a geophysical survey revealed the vicus to the north and in 2007 Time Team extended the geophysical survey of the outside of the fort to the west. Based on the results of these surveys a partnership of Durham County Council, Durham University, Stanford University and local volunteers launched a programme of further excavations that began in 2010 and was intended to run for five years.

The first fort on the site was built in wood in the second half of the first century AD. Later, but at an unknown date, it was rebuilt in stone with an impressive bath house for the commander. This is now preserved under a timber building. Outside the bathhouse, the surface of Dere Street is exposed and on the northern side of this lies the usual bewildering complex of low stone walls and paved areas - helpfully labelled on the plan in this case as 'gutters', 'a kitchen', 'a slaughter house', 'late 3rd century walls' etc.

The results of the excavations from 2009 have exposed part of the east corner of the stone fort up to its northern perimeter wall. Against the back of the defences lies an impressive cistern and (that favourite of children), what must have been the fort loo. In layout the remains show the standard plan of a Roman fort with barrack blocks, paved alleys and drainage.

Binchester was a base for cavalry units and it is known that there was a unit from Spain present in the 2nd century and one made up of Dutch tribesmen in the 3rd century. The barrack blocks were divided longitudinally down the centre with quarters for horses on one side and troopers on the other. Later, probably the early 4th century, the barrack was narrowed to 7.5m which must have made a bit of a squash for both horses and men.

The most recent work has been outside the fort to the east. Here a civilian settlement with wooden frame houses set on stone blocks faced onto Dere Street. But the most important discovery and the one that gave rise to Binchester being called the 'Pompeii of the North' was the regimental bathhouse (*BA*, Oct 2014, 10).

The walls of the bath house stand to 2m high and retain much of the once brightly-painted plaster. Stone floor, doorways and window openings and bits of plumbing still remain in place. David demonstrated how it is possible to walk through the rooms with walls well above head height. Finds include an altar to the goddess Fortune, the Home-Bringer, and a ring with two fish on an anchor, only

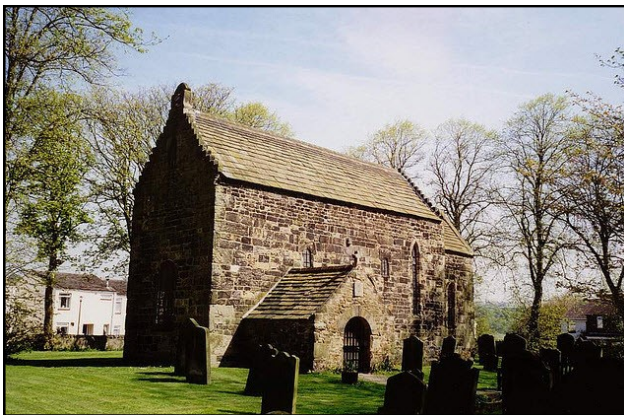
the second of its kind found in Britain. This is thought to date from the 3rd century and is believed to be an early sign of Christianity. More of the bath house has yet to be uncovered but it is hoped that the ceilings of other rooms may still be intact.

Harry Hawkins

After we'd finished at Binchester we moved on to Escomb, just a few miles down the road where we planned to visit the church. The first priority, however, was to revive ourselves in Escomb's 'Saxon Inn', which provided some solid and remarkably cheap refreshment.

The pub is well-named as, on the other side of the road, stood Escomb Church, a Saxon church dating from 7th Century and built of stone thought to have come from Binchester Roman Fort. Now restored and in daily use, it is regarded as one of the finest examples of early Christian architecture in Northern Europe.

It hardly needs saying but we were all very impressed. The footprint of the church is quite tiny but it is strangely lofty and its massive stonework gives it a powerful architectural personality. This is enhanced by its position within a generously-proportioned oval-shaped churchyard. The conjectured date is 675AD, which is really very early indeed - think Beowulf and then take several centuries off!



Escomb Church - picture courtesy
<http://escombsaxonchurch.co.uk/>

Our guide pointed out many interesting features and then we were left to contemplate this piece of living history at our leisure. It had been a last-minute decision to include Escomb in our tour, but it was a good one.

Martin Joyce



Medieval Deer Parks of Cumbria

Harry Hawkins, a local historian and a member of Appleby Archaeology Group, entertained and informed a full house at their March meeting with a beautifully illustrated presentation entitled "Medieval Deer Parks of Cumbria - a story of deer, hunting, food, status, and pleasure".

Red and roe deer are native to Britain and it was the Normans who introduced fallow deer. Other breeds such as sika and muntjac were introduced later primarily to enhance the parklands.



Red Deer in Lowther Deer Park

Before the Norman invasion, hunting of all animals was open to all, but after the conquest, the Norman kings claimed all deer and all wild animals as their property and controlled their hunting by licences and grants to nobles and prelates. The chase of the hunt was most important at this stage as the deer were chased to exhaustion by dogs and it became a highly ritualised and elaborate event for the ruling classes. Harry showed a number of slides of paintings and engravings to illustrate this.

Evidence of deer hunting can be seen in the cave paintings from Lascaux France (15,000BC). Carvings from Nineveh 645BC show deer being driven into a net. In the middle ages illustrations of deer, pursued by dogs, are seen on floor tiles from France and in an illustration from the Lanercost Cartulary. Statues of the Greek and Roman Goddesses of hunting include deer.

The Norman kings regarded all wild animals as their property and reserved large areas of England as Royal Forests subject to Forest Law. The forests included settlements, open countryside as well as woodland and they were at their peak in the 13th and 14th centuries. Granting of licences to barons and prelates to enclose land and form deer parks provided income for the crown.

Live deer were highly valued as gifts, particularly as royal gifts, and were transported considerable distances. Venison was highly valued and was reserved for special guests. The records of the analysis of animal remains indicate that consumption of deer increased in the 11th and 12th centu-

ries and that venison was a high status food. Records show that Inglewood Forest supplied huge quantities to royal larders in the south, 100 -200 stags annually between July 1234 and 1251. The management of the forests was governed by charters and four clauses in Magna Carta refer to them.

There were baronial deer parks across Cumbria including parks at Greystoke, Cockermouth, Kendal, Millom and Flakebridge, Appleby. Evidence of these can be found in documents eg. records of granting licences and early maps and on the ground. Traces of boundaries often as earth banks which would have carried wooden fences or pales can be seen for example at Lowther and Brough and at Ravenstonedale where there are stretches of drystone wall 3-4 metres high. Place names may provide a clue as at Hartley Park, Kirby Stephen where the field names include Upper Park, Lower Park and East Park. The audience was intrigued by a modern map of Regents Park London and one of Regents Deer Park where the boundaries were virtually the same. To ensure that the deer stayed within the park ditches were dug on the inside and deer leaps were constructed on the boundaries to enable deer to get in to the park but not out. Traces of these may be seen as well as evidence of the keepers' cottages.

By the reign of Edward III the forest system had fallen into disuse. Many parks only held managed deer for a relatively short time and restocking became more difficult as wild deer numbers declined. The parks were often were sub-divided for different uses such as pasture and beasts and in the later Medieval Period they were used for horses.

A number of medieval parks survived and were recreated as landscape parks in the Renaissance and Romantic Period. At Kendal Castle windows were placed so that guests would look out over the extent of the park which was abandoned in 1586. Appleby Castle had a small pleasure park around the castle. In the 18th and 19th century parks were again symbols of status and designed to impress. Deer were put into the parks to create a romantic scene, to be part of the view, and their meat was a by-product of the design landscape rather than a reason for it. At Lowther there are the remnant of several landscape features, a shooting wall, a possible folly and a building where picnics could be enjoyed. The 18th and 19th centuries also saw the creation of parks around quite modest country houses as the merchant classes increased their wealth and sought to impress their neighbours with a landed estate.

Harry concluded his informative talk by saying that two of Cumbria's medieval deer parks survive with deer - red deer at Lowther and black and fallow at Levens

Phyl Rouston



The Celts - Art and Identity

Those of you travelling beyond the Eden Valley this autumn should look out for a new exhibition on the Celts opening at the British Museum in London

Everyone has their own idea of 'a Celt' probably highly influenced by the captive warriors shown on Trajan's triumphant column in Rome, the Battersea shield or the enigmatic carvings found mainly in North West Scotland; or maybe you're a fan of Gladiator!

A visit to the British Museum's major new exhibition may shatter some illusions.

Celts were not just one small group of people and their art encompassed many lands. Examples of Celtic art stretch from the so called 'La Tene' art forms exemplified by the famous 'Battersea' Shield' to the intricate curves of The Book of Kells.

Advance publicity promises that the exhibition will include wide ranging examples of 'Celtic' art forms and will draw on the latest research by leading practitioners.

If you're not travelling to London don't despair - the exhibition moves to Edinburgh in March.

British Museum London. Sep 24th 2015-Jan 31st 2016.

National Museum of Scotland. Mar 10th - Sep 25th 2016

Heather Edwards

Autumn Lectures

Archaeology of the A66 - Greta Bridge to Scotch Corner

Tuesday 13th Oct

Speaker : John Zant

St Michaels Workington

Tuesday 10th Nov

Speaker : Linda Hodgson

Excavation of the Roman cemetery on Botcher-gate, Carlisle

Tuesday 8th Dec

Speaker : Richard Newman

